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netFRONT

How many gadgets do you need? >

Executive Summary:

That depends on how connected to your job—or to the world—you want to be all the time.

By Janeson Keeley

Thirty years ago, the majority of computers were owned by businesses, and phones were wired to the wall. Now, if you are a business professional who is “on the clock” when you are out of the office, chances are you are going to need more functionality than a phone and a desktop computer can provide.

Yes, you can buy a cell phone that only sends and receives calls, but smartphones—iPhones, Androids, and Blackberries—also allow you to surf the Internet, send and receive email and run applications.

However, many people find that smartphones aren’t practical for writing lengthy e-mails or working on documents. The next step up can be either a pad computer, such as an iPad or Xoom, or a netbook. While they have similar sized screens (7 to 10 inches), Wifi capabilities, and optional network phone service connectivity, neither has a built-in CD/DVD drive, so, as with smartphones, applications must be downloaded.

The next step up is the notebook (or laptop) computer, which has most of the functionality of a desktop computer but is more portable, with screen sizes varying from 12 to 17 inches.

How do you decide which devices you need?

My beloved spouse, Buffy Lyon, a Web applications programmer and self-proclaimed geek, says, “I’ve been known to use three [devices] at once: running an IDE or CAD



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program on the notebook, using the iPad to look stuff up, and using the iPhone as a calculator. Personally, I find that the iPad does two-thirds of what the phone does and two-thirds of what the notebook does, making it my first choice most of the time."

Kimberly Christian, sales manager with Venco Business Solutions, reports, "I'm really not able to completely work unless I have access to my laptop and all of my data, though during the day as I'm out and about for meetings it is much easier to take my iPad along instead of my large laptop."

Raquel Rothe, CRT-NPS, sleep technologist and owner/operations manager for Sleep EZ Diagnostic Center Inc., owns a laptop, a netbook, an iPad, and a Droid X smartphone. "I can honestly say that I rarely use anything except my iPad. I can remote into my facility

to any computer/camera so I have to have access via internet, and the iPad makes it so much faster and easier to do so. I can honestly say between the iPad and Android I can run my business 24/7 if the need be."

Suzanne Ashley, a SendOutCards representative, has a laptop and a smartphone and is planning to get a pad soon. "Most of what I do for work is Internet-based," she says. "I think I will be able to use it [the pad] for most of my needs while being on the go. I truly believe we are becoming more mobile ... and I want to be able to help others wherever we are. Our phones and tablets allow us to do so."

(BTW, I wrote this column on my laptop at the car repair shop—with my iPad next to me to check e-mail and my phone to make calls. Buffy's not the only techno-nerd in our house.) 



Great work deserves recognition.

Spectrum Design recognizes and congratulates Dr. Lorraine Lange of Roanoke County Public Schools on being named Virginia's Superintendent of the Year.

Equally, our firm thanks Dr. Lange, the Roanoke County School Board and staff for recognizing the building that Cave Spring Middle School will become, and we look forward to producing this great work together.

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